



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TICKS TEST POSITIVE FOR TULAREMIA NEAR LOS PENASQUITOS CANYON ***Hikers Urged to be Cautious and Use Insect Repellent When Hiking***

Several ticks collected in routine monitoring last week in the Lopez Canyon area of Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve have tested positive for tularemia, a potentially serious illness also known as "rabbit fever," County environmental health officials said Friday.

"Tularemia is a bacterial, vector-borne disease that can be transmitted to humans through the bite of infected ticks, or through direct contact with an infected animal such as rabbits and other rodents," said Jack Miller, director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "We recommend using insect repellent to prevent ticks and other insects from biting, especially when hiking in bushy areas. Flea and tick control products should also be used on pets."

Ticks get tularemia by biting infected rabbits, rodents or other animals.

"Symptoms in humans include lymph node swelling, headache and fever," said County Public Health Officer Dr. Wilma Wooten. "Other symptoms include a skin ulcer at the site of the bite, fatigue, body aches and nausea. Tularemia cannot be transmitted from person-to-person, but it can be transmitted by handling infected meat, or drinking water contaminated by an infected animal. Tularemia can also cause death in rare cases, but is treatable with antibiotics."

To avoid tick bites:

- Stay on designated pathways, choose wide trails and walk in the center. Avoid grassy or brushy areas and do not handle wild rodents.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved clothing; tuck shirts into pants and pants into socks.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing and footwear.
- Check clothing, body and companions for ticks frequently.
- Leave pets at home or keep them on a leash. If they have not been already treated with a tick and flea regimen, use insecticide powders or sprays labeled for tick control.
- Carefully remove attached ticks immediately. Remove embedded ticks by grabbing them with tweezers as close to the insect's head as possible and pulling out steadily and firmly.

If you develop symptoms within three weeks after visiting a tick-infested area, seek medical attention. Tell your doctor that you have recently been in a tick-infested area. For more information about Tularemia surveillance, call the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or visit www.SDVector.com.

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